

REPUBLICANS BLOCK AN INCREASE WHILE WORKERS SUFFER

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the Republican leadership of this body is preparing to adjourn the House for a 5-week vacation at the end of this week without meeting the needs of America's working families. Republicans continue to block an increase in the minimum wage that would benefit 6.6 million people in this country, three-quarters of whom are adults over the age of 20 trying to support their families.

This Republican Congress has refused to raise the minimum wage since 1997, causing it now to reach its lowest real value level in 50 years. The current pay of \$5.15 per hour is simply not a fair or living wage in this economy. In fact, it now takes a minimum wage earner a full day's pay just to buy a tank of gas. What does that leave for housing and for food?

Democrats believe that it is simply unacceptable in this great and wealthy Nation for an American who works full time to live in poverty while the Republicans in this body give handouts to the wealthiest 1 percent.

Mr. Speaker, House Republicans have had numerous opportunities to vote for an increase in the minimum wage; yet they continue to stall this critical measure while millions of Americans suffer the consequences.

We should not leave this week without giving 6 million Americans a pay raise.

DEMOCRATS HAVE BEEN RIGHT ABOUT IRAQ ALL ALONG, WILLING TO ASK THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Prime Minister of Iraq will address a joint session of Congress, and I hope that he levels with us about the current situation in his nation.

Over the past week, the violence in Iraq has been replaced on the front pages and the television screens by the violence in Lebanon and Israel. However, that does not mean that things are getting any better. In fact, last month more than 3,100 Iraqis were killed in sectarian violence. That is more than 100 killed every day.

While the situation in Iraq continues to spiral out of control, the Bush administration is just simply incapable of coming up with a strategy that provides a new direction. And for 3 years now, the House Republicans have refused to demand any answers from this administration about its failures in Iraq. They have allowed the incompetence to continue without holding anyone responsible.

Congress can no longer sit on the sidelines. It is time to recognize that our brave young men and women must come home. They must be brought home as quickly as possible. We must end this occupation of Iraq. We need to provide a new direction for this administration and for our country. The American people are insisting on that.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, when this House passed the Medicare prescription drug benefit, many of us said it was a boon for the drug companies.

The results are in. Drug companies are making billions in extra profits, \$130 billion in additional profits, all subsidized by the taxpayer. This morning's New York Times reads: "Eventually" the prescription drug bill "could fuel a political reaction if the drug prices continue to rise, but analysts expect that the industry's influence in Washington will delay any changes for years."

Therein lies the problem. This Congress is too busy doing the bidding of the drug companies and the drug companies' business to do the people's business.

On numerous occasions the House and Senate have voted strongly in favor of importation of prescription drugs. Importation is a safe and effective way to help consumers and taxpayers save money. Just 2 weeks ago, the Senate voted to block Customs from seizing shipments of prescription drugs; yet the seizures continue. The administration has turned the Customs Service over to the drug companies, confiscating prescription drugs at a time when they should be securing our borders, screening cargo, and stemming the flow of dangerous narcotics. The intent of the House and the Senate is clear.

It is time for a new direction. It is time for a new policy that makes sense to the American people.

STRAIGHT TALK ON THE ECONOMY

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give the American people some straight talk about our economy.

In 1992 Bill Clinton ran for President with the slogan: "It's the economy, stupid." Yesterday his wife, Hillary, reminded us of that slogan in her speech to the Democratic Leadership Council.

Well, our economy is very strong and growing. We have created 5.4 million new jobs in the last 3 years. Our unemployment rate is better than the average unemployment rate of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We have had 18 straight quarters of economic growth.

Homeownership is now at 69 percent, the largest in history. And our revenues are coming in so high that we will be able to meet our goal of cutting the deficit in half by 2008, a full year ahead of schedule.

This time let's take the Clintons at their word. If it is "the economy, stupid," then let's be smart and reelect those Congressmen who gave us this strong economy in the first place by lowering the taxes.

SOME HOUSE REPUBLICANS FINALLY WILLING TO ADMIT MISTAKES ON IRAQ. WHAT TOOK THEM SO LONG?

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, after more than 3 years of fighting the war in Iraq, it now appears that some House Republicans are finally beginning to question the administration's competence in running the war and are finally beginning to question the rosy scenarios that continue to come from Vice President CHENEY and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld.

An article in last week's Washington Post, entitled "GOP Lawmakers Edge Away from Optimism on Iraq," says that Republicans are having to reconsider their strategy on the war. With an average of over 100 Iraqis dying every day last month, one of my Republican colleagues admitted that they have to change their message so they don't look like they can't face reality.

And so now, after berating Democrats for the past 3 years and questioning the administration's failed policies in Iraq, some House Republicans are willing to admit that things are not going well in Iraq.

Now the question is, Is this a convenient message that they plan to use for the next couple of months between now and mid-term elections, or will my Republican colleagues actually take their oversight responsibilities responsibly? Only time will tell.

STEM CELL RESEARCH: HOUSE GOP REFUSES TO OVERRIDE VETO

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, last week House Republicans refused to override the President's veto of life-saving stem cell research. Their action will hurt our Nation's effort to find cures to diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and cancer.

The stem cell research bill could have directly benefited an estimated 100 million of our fellow Americans, those personally fighting these diseases and their family members who share their suffering and pain. The legislation would have expanded Federal funding for extremely promising embryonic stem cell research while at the